Newsletter

Vol.7 No.2 (Winter 2009/2010)

Keeping you up-to-date with local and national RIGS activities

UKRIGS GEOCONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

In This Issue:

E D I T O R I A L

Apologies for those of you who were eagerly awaiting the pre-Christmas arrival of this last edition of the Newsletter in its old guise; the EGM's acceptance of our rebranding as GeoConservationUK and other constitutional matters necessitate some design changes for the Newsletter in 2010. Having spent an interesting December night snowbound in my car, I have acquired a healthier respect for our Stone Age ancestors and their ability to cope with real climate extremes! Still, it was good to be prepared with a winter travel kit of sleeping bag, food, etc. in the boot and my thanks go to the other two drivers with whom I spent the night digging out and turning round other vehicles; it seems that common adversity really does bring out the best in most citizens. At least the landforms on the slow drive home the next morning stood out in the prevailing harsh weather conditions! Anyway, having 'lost' several days in the fortnight up to Christmas, it's only in early January that I have finally found enough 'free' time to finish editing a text I began in early December! So, welcome to a bumper issue with a bit more of a focus than usual on Scotland.

As this is the time of year when most people seem to make and somewhat quickly break resolutions I thought I would spare myself the anguish and embarrassment of the same; then there was the one which really stuck out as a really worthwhile resolution - sticking to Newsletter deadlines for 2010! So here's hoping . . . This is also the season when we happily renew, even if only with the briefest of Christmas / New Year card rhymes and a signature, old acquaintances and sadly recall the year's departures and losses. Some of the noteworthy departures are from the various Groups, working parties, and committees with which many of us are associated; in this context it is nice to be able to record with thanks the contributions of Martyn Bradley and Peter Jones to the Association's Executive Committee from which they both stepped down this year. Sadly, amongst the year's losses is a real stalwart of conservation, but if we follow the ancient Greeks in recalling his life and work, then Charles Copp will continue to live with us for some considerable time; certainly the legacy of his work underpins many modern geoconservation recording approaches.

The New Year is also inevitably when changes come. The Association has had to look, like most of us and our employers, at its approach to dealing with the current economic circumstances and to prudently review its commitments. Some changes, mainly updating, have been introduced to the website but other than that, it is very much business as usual for the Association in promoting geoconservation across the UK.

I wish you all well in the coming field seasons and please do keep those stories and images coming in for the various issue deadlines; without your reported efforts there cannot be a real Newsletter communicating the endeavour and pleasure of geoconservation.

Tom Hose

LOCAL RIGS GROUPS – SCOTLAND

STRATHCLYDE RIGS GROUP

Strathclyde RIGS Group began in 2003 with a remit to cover the old Strathclyde Region. Since then two other Groups have taken on part of this huge task – Geodiversity, Argyll and the Islands and Geodiversity Dumfries and Galloway.

Strathclyde RIGS still covers some dozen local authority areas. One, East Dunbartonshire has furthering the cause of geodiversity as one of its aims. After approaching the RIGS Group, a contract was let to BGS, part-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage to carry out a geodiversity audit. This has now been completed and will be used to inform the Local Plan and help protect the geology of the area.

In addition to existing leaflets on Ardmore Point on the Clyde and Fossil Grove, the Group have now produced "The Geology of Campsie Glen" a trail of the Glen and foothills of the Campsie Fells telling of Carboniferous cementstones, plateau lavas and faulting.

With the support of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park an A3 guide to Balmaha titled "*Where the Lowlands meet the Highlands"* describes a scenic trail along the east shore of Loch Lomond where the Highland Boundary fault can be studied.

Due to continued efforts of the Group, the Fossil Grove continues to be open Easter to end-September; it is also possible to arrange visits outside of these times.

Information on all these sites is available on the RIGS section of www.geologyglasgow.org.uk.

GEODIVERSITY DUMFRIES and GALLOWAY

Diana Turner of this Group is reaching a much wider audience than dedicated geologists through a quarterly article she writes for her local paper; extracts from a relatively recent one are reprinted below to give something of their populist flavour:

Around its picturesque harbour Kirkcudbright nestles on the estuary of the River Dee . . . and boasts many historical delights. Maclellan's Castle is a ruined tower house . . . dating from around 1580. In 1627 the Tollbooth was built and there still remains the old Merkat Cross where the "baddies" of the day were given their just deserves. The Town Hall and the Museum are grand buildings too . . . Everywhere there are other beautiful stone houses and walls . . . giving the whole area an aura of antiquity. It isn't hard to understand that people have been gathering rocks and shaping stone for many hundreds of years but can you imagine how old these rocks really are and where they came from?

Rocks like, slate, sandstone, shale and granite are more likely to be the origin of the town's building blocks, quarried at places like Dalbeattie, Creetown, Locharbriggs and Craignair and would have been emplaced at their current position between 510 and 290 million years ago. The Kirkcudbright landscape however also hides rocks like greywackes, siltstones, agglomerate, lamprophyre, basalt and breccia. Here sedimentary or layered, rocks like the greywackes and siltstones were laid down in a time known as the Silurian Period. The volcanic dykes, or tunnels carrying the igneous rock from deep under volcanoes, cut through these sedimentary rocks a bit later in that period and into the early Devonian Period around 405 million years ago, as the region's local geological society, GeoD, discovered along the rugged coastline at Shoulder O'Craig.

Shattered agglomerate intrusion on the beach at Nun Mill Bay.

A group of 20 members got together and drove south from Kirkcudbright along the A755 and B727 and parked at the picnic area at the picturesque Nun Mill Bay. Our walk took us along the coast . . . we came across our first exciting find; an agglomerate filled volcanic vent, or opening, cutting through the greywacke and siltstone layers. . .

LOCAL RIGS GROUPS – SCOTLAND

The GeoDiversity Dumfries and Galloway RIGS group has also had some good recent publicity with the construction and opening of the GeoDial. Something like 40 tons of rock has gone into the construction of the 'Moniaive GeoDial - the Gateway to Geology in Dumfries and Galloway' (see feature article below). The opening ceremony on Saturday, 28th September was the culmination of much time and effort spent in obtaining initial funding for the project, followed by hours spent driving around the countryside sourcing suitable rocks,, not to mention the laborious hours spent cutting and shaping the rocks, haulaging and placing the huge seating stones and pathway pebbles around the GeoDial, and actually constructing the GeoDial itself. There was also much work-time spent on clearing tons of leftover rock, landscaping and planting flower bulbs, designing, building and erecting an Information Board and the final stone pathways to the GeoDial and around the Information Board. If that wasn't enough there was also the considerable effort by the Group's members in preparing for the opening ceremony; this included, helping to decorate the dining room with kids' pictures, giving fantastic talks, prizes, preparing a really wonderful meal, cake and wine, taking photographic records and helping with the parade. Of course, the pupils of Moniaive Primary School put a tremendous effort into their geological Art Project. Some of the fun and excitement of the GeoDial's opening was captured by the BBC and subsequently broadcast across the UK.

The GeoDial with the BBC in attendance (above) and the parade accompanying the opening ceremony (below).

The GeoDial - Gateway to Geology in Dumfries and Galloway

Article and photography by Diana Turner.

It's difficult to imagine the ferocious eruptions and thunderous earth movements of the past as you walk through the present tranquil landscape fashioned by the geology of Dumfries and Galloway. It was this landscape and years of fell-running over mountains and through rivers and valleys that inspired my interest in geology. Two years ago I started a geology group called "GeoD" and we are now a sub committee of the Geological Society of Glasgow and the first Geological Society of Dumfries and Galloway. I was looking for a first project idea and the concept for a garden came one day when I was asked what I was going to do with the two tons of rock I had accumulated on my study floor! So I put crayon to paper and came up with a design for a geological garden called the "GeoDial".

The local school and Community Council in Moniaive, Dumfriesshire heard about my idea, asked me to build it in their Wildlife Garden beside the Dalwhat Water, and then offered to help seek funding to pay for its construction. And so began six months of fantastic fun, sourcing the rocks at various locations around Dumfries and Galloway and working with some wonderful people - especially our funders: Scottish Natural Heritage, the Institute of Physics and BBC Breathing Places; those who donated, transported and cut the rocks, Kenny Marchbanks Haulage, Andy McKinna Stonemason and Kirkconnel, Cloburn, Duneaton and Dalbeattie Quarries; and Stuart Monroe scientific director of Dynamic Earth for opening the GeoDial Launch Event.

The rocks you see in the garden are mostly from Dumfries and Galloway but some come from Canada, Africa, Europe and Scandinavia highlighting our geological history of attachment to these countries eons ago. Here in the garden you can walk beside fossil corral and sea creatures, sit on fossil tree roots and leaves and even climb over an extinct volcano or two! You will find a wealth of rocks of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic origin….

LOCAL RIGS GROUPS – SCOTLAND

Coarse grained granite from Dalbeattie; basalt lava flows in the glaciated valley of the Dalveen Pass; gabbro from the Southern Upland Fault; agglomerate, lamprophyre, dolerite and diorite intrusions through quarries, hillsides and seashores of the Solway Coast; black shale and sandstone gullies cutting the Moffat Hills; mudstone, coal and seatearth around Kirkconnel; limestones full of fossils, mudstones, sandstones all exposed along the coastal pathways from Carsethorne to Stranraer; conglomerate outcrops at Shinnelhead and glacial deposits of pebbles and gravel in the Scar, Nith and Shinnel river valleys.

Around the GeoDial the larger rocks are for sitting on and will always remain in place. The smaller rocks between will be continually changed to show the vast variety of rocks around the region. A "Swaps" box containing local rock samples will be regularly filled allowing people to take a rock from the box and swap it, with a rock they find elsewhere, on their next visit. This will encourage adults and children to compare, identify and look for the diversity of the rocks beneath their feet. The GeoDial has been built as an outdoor classroom for children from local schools as part of their "Curriculum for Excellence" Education Programme. This encourages teachers to take children outside for lessons in the sunshine. It has also been recommended as an education tool for those studying Earth Sciences at University because it is so unusual to see fresh rock so accessible. Visitors can walk along the pathway and over the bridge from the village and enjoy a tranquil moment sitting by the GeoDial. Geologists have said they've never seen or heard of another GeoDial and think it may be the only one in the world so why not visit Moniaive and see it for yourself!!! If you would like to know more about Dumfries and Galloway's geology or The GeoD Society please contact me at moffatdmt@hotmail.com

geoHERITAGE FIFE

Judging by a recent mail out for their AGM, **geoHeritage Fife** has had a busy and rewarding year. Its major activities included volunteers kindly walking and assessing the draft of the *'Building Stones of St Andrews'* trail; many useful comments were received which will be incorporated into the next draft. The Kinghorn - Kirkcaldy geological trail was also revisited in the summer and a second draft of it was prepared. At the invitation of one of the Group's members, Richard Batchelor visited St Athernase Church, Leuchars, with a view to producing a *Stones of St Athernase'* leaflet; this is now in draft form and volunteers to test drive it will be welcome in due course. Meanwhile, and also on the publications' front, the *'Geological Wall'* leaflet has been reprinted. Another approach to promoting and publicising geology was an application for a grant to run a photographic competition in 2010 focussing on the 'Art of Rocks in Fife'; Fife Council has rather generously awarded **geoHeritage Fife** £850 (from the original application for £1000) towards this worthwhile project .

On a more practical geoconservation note, the recording of giant fossil scorpion tracks near St Andrews moved a step forward when Richard Batchelor contacted a specialist. This specialist then visited the site and made test moulds. He was then able to quote for the whole recording job. On that basis, an application was made to Scottish Natural Heritage for funding and **geoHeritage Fife** was awarded £5,432 towards the costs (70%) of making moulds and producing plaster casts. Another application for the balance (30%), about £2000, was sent to The Curry Fund of the Geologists' Association; this was approved in December 2009 and Hopefully, work will begin in February 2010.

geoHeritage Fife was represented (by Richard Batchelor) on a consortium, led by the University of St. Andrews, to publicise the cultural and scientific aspects of Fife, for a Fife Council initiative called 'Celebrating Fife 2010'; its contribution will be to explain the geology of coal formation and the role that coal played in the Industrial Revolution in Fife. The consortium as a whole was awarded £22,000, of which about £1,500 will come to geoHeritage Fife to create a mobile exhibition which will tour St Andrews, Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline over the course of the year.

So, there will be much for members to complete in 2010!

LOCAL RIGS GROUPS – ENGLAND

Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter October 2009

Fossil & Archaeology Day - County Museum, Aylesbury. July 18th 2009

Many thanks to all the members who volunteered their help at the Fossil and Archaeology Day. It was a successful event and generated lots of interest with the visiting public. Mike Palmer made some museum specimens and information about the group available. Simon Penn brought along some fossil specimens he has personally collected (Photo right) and Mike Henty brought along a collection of unusual minerals.

Some of Simon Penn's collection. Of special note was the Metriorhynchus tooth (lower left) and a number of Plesiosaur and Ichthyosaur vertebrae.

Ivinghoe to College Lake walk August 27th 2009

Jill Eyers lead the group on one of the new geological walks. The main features observed were the Chalk geology and how weathering and erosion have shaped it into the Chiltern Hills.
As always Jill was able to bring to life the archaeological evidence and how the Chalk grassland and scrub now support a wide variety of habitats and wildlife. The walk leaflet is available on the website:

As these extracts from their Newsletter show, the Group has been active over the summer and Autumn promoting geology to a wide audience, especially at the Fossil and Archaeology Day hosted by Aylesbury Museum. The Group also laid on a training course for amateur geologists to help them identify minerals and rocks, both in hand specimens and in the field, with a workshop run by Jill Eyres; this was made possible through funding from Natural England.

BERKSHIRE GEOLOGY GROUP

Linking Geodiversity and Biodiversity

Over the last 18 months Berkshire Geology Group has been running joint walks with the Friends of the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys. The walks have been jointly led by Dick Greenaway MBE, a local natural and social history expert, and Lesley Dunlop. Dick has much experience of West Berkshire and has written two very good books of walks in the area, particularly concentrating on the River Pang. The 'Friends' volunteer group has a very active membership and it was thought that by combining leadership on these walks there would be a complement of interests.

Part of a visitor group on Ashampstead common. A gravel plateau over sands and chalk in Berkshire.

There have now been six walks, varying in length from 3 to 6 miles and generally covering good paths; attendance has been good for all of them, averaging in the mid-twenties fro the series and attracting high numbers, even on wet November days!

The overall feedback has been very positive and although these are definitely walks with a geological interest rather than geological ones it has been easy to introduce landscape and geology into them. Not many people will forget walking over the London Clay on a wet slope or seeing streams disappear into swallow holes.

Opportunities have been taken to point out the building stones of the area, and link them with the local geology; flint, sarsen and brick being readily available, and familiar to everyone. Local industries take advantage of the local geology: chalk downland provides excellent training areas for race horses, gravel extraction ultimately provides new wildlife habitats in the wet lands which have been created, and local buildings are enhanced and give character to an area if local brickworks have been used. The variations in plant life from alkali loving plants on chalk to acid preferring gorses and heathers on the heathland of gravel river terraces and the different land use in agriculture has been well illustrated. Thus geology can be seen to underpin all our activities and brings a new interest to an otherwise well known locality. A series of six leaflets have been produced, which it is hoped will be combined into a book. For more information contact:

Lesley Dunlop on lesley.dunlop@oxfordshire.gov.uk or berkshirerigs.org.uk

LOCAL RIGS GROUPS – England

Improvements at Tedbury Camp Quarry

Tedbury Camp Quarry is one of the most important geological sites in southern England. Located at the eastern end of the Mendip Hills, near Frome in Somerset, this geosite reveals a spectacular unconformity between steeply dipping Carboniferous Limestone and the overlying sub -horizontal Jurassic Inferior Oolite. Now we are pleased to hear that significant improvements have been made to the quarry which is used regularly by visitors to the nearby Somerset Earth Science Centre and by geologists from further afield.

A surface within the Inferior Oolite.

Key to the success of these improvements was the very generous provision of materials, tools, transportation and some manpower by three local quarrying companies, Hanson UK, John Wainwright and Co Ltd and Tarmac Limited. Working in tandem with these resources was a group of volunteers from various geoconservation groups across southern England led by Martin Whiteley. Some volunteers came for the odd day, whilst others stayed for a week, but in total more than 250 man hours were spent installing a flight of steps up to the quarry floor and clearing key exposures within it. Now it is far easier to access the site and the freshly cleared exposures provide further information about the geological history of the area.

These improvements are testimony to collaborative working. Not only did it get the job done, but it generated an enormous sense of enthusiasm and satisfaction. Every opportunity was taken to explain the purpose of the work to passing members of the public, and a local scout group that was camping nearby has agreed to visit the quarry periodically to control the invasive undergrowth. If that wasn't enough, no fewer than fifty geologists from Cardiff University, Rotherham Sixth Form College and Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group happened to use the site during the four days following completion of the work. Useful websites for visitors are:

http://www.esta-uk.net/tedbury_camp_quarry.html

http://www.earthsciencecentre.org.uk/

Martin Whiteley
Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group

Completed steps - at long last!

Clearing the Inferior Oolite - a very manual process!.

Tools and the mess tent - who'd believe you'd need so many?

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

New Black Country Geology Leaflets released.

The Black Country Geological Society

Two new free leaflets on the theme of "Scorching Deserts and Icy Wastes" have been released, one for Sandwell and one for Walsall. They were produced by Alan Cutler who also wrote the text in his capacity as Project Co-ordinator of the Black Country Geodiversity Partnership. Funding was via Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund administered by Natural England.

The title reflects the association of local sources of sand and gravel which are either Permo/Triassic sediments (the deserts) or glaciofluvial deposits (the icy wastes). The primary purpose of the leaflets is to raise awareness amongst local communities of the climates and landscapes of two very different and distinct episodes, which have affected what we now call the Black Country, in the past. The leaflets are being distributed via the respective Libraries Services and Countryside Services of the two boroughs. In addition the leaflets are available from Dudley Museum, the Lapworth Museum and the Thinktank (Birmingham Science Museum).

There has been a very pleasing response, especially from those without a geological background, to the design and content of the leaflets which include simplified geological maps of the respective boroughs.

Subject to further funding it is hoped that similar leaflets for Dudley and Wolverhampton will be produced in due course. The new leaflets join those for Barrow Hill -The Dudley Volcano (2005), and Norton Covert (2008). All the leaflets include the Society's logo thus sharing some of the kudos.

Dudley MBC has also released an updated reprint of the free Wren's Nest NNR leaflet. Although the choice of cover illustration is controversial (look hard to see any rocks), this is a welcome updated version of a popular leaflet which has been out of print for some time. Copies are available from the Wren's Nest wardens and from reception at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery. ■

It is pleasing to be able to report that the Black Country Geological Society continues to successfully promote local and regional geology through its various talks and walks. The October edition of its Newsletter (part of which is reprinted above) included some very good news on the geological interpretation front. Somewhat unsurprisingly that local stalwart of geoconservation, and incidentally also of the Executive Committee of UKRIGS, Alan Cutler, was the driving force behind the two new leaflets *"Scorching Deserts and Icy Wastelands"*. These well-written leaflets, with their high quality reproduction and format, will undoubtedly appeal to a wide audience and are bound to be popular with even casual walkers into the areas' countryside. Just a pity that for the Wren's Nest reprint the orchid grassland attracted the photographer's eye rather than the superb reef and lagoonal limestones in the background; still we must not be philistines when it comes to nature conservation and must occasionally embrace it in its broadest sense!

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

The Woolhope Naturalists Field Club

The Club was founded in 1851/2, placing it amongst the earliest practical field societies in the English provinces. When some members of the earlier *Herefordshire Natural History, Literary, Philosophical and Antiquarian Society* (HNHLP&AS) of 1836 had expressed unease regarding a perceived antiquarian bias to their programme they contemplated a separate botanical institution; various other members also considered starting a geology field club. When news of such intentions emerged there was anxiety over a possible clash of interests, and that two more field societies might not be viable in a sparsely populated county. However, there was sufficient mutual interests amongst the malcontents permitting the establishment of a single general natural history field club; this was intended to be both scientifically inspired and firmly rooted in a programme of field excursions and/or lectures.

The new club provided a cradle for the growing - and now increasingly scientific - interest in geology, deriving its name and emblem from the Woolhope anticline and included Sir Roderick I. Murchison as an Honorary Member and initial President. Prominent amongst the local forerunners of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (WNFC) was the Rev. T.T. Lewis (1801~1858), one-time curate of Aymestrey, who was born and raised in Ludlow and had attended Sedgwick's lectures at Cambridge when reading Divinity. Thus was bequeathed a legacy of local names - Aymestrey Limestone, Ludlow Shales, Wenlock Limestone, Woolhope Limestone etc. - by which the Silurian rocks came to be initially classified. Although dual membership of the two institutions - HNHLP&AS and WNFC.- initially continued, the older society suffered in consequence and its attendances and membership gradually dwindled; following its 1869 demise, the antiquarian mantle was increasingly adopted by the Woolhope Club as can be gauged from its periodically printed in the *Transactions*.

The Geology Section represents something of long (having been founded in 2002) overdue return to the Club's roots. Three of the Club's Central Committee members sought approval for its formation and a public meeting was held in November 2002 which attracted a considerable body of enthusiasts, comprising six of the Club's Central Committee and various other members, but also including many other persons not then Club members. The Meeting formally adopted the proposed name of 'The Woolhope Geology Section' (WGS) and elected the requisite committee which first drew up an schedule of six lectures and/or field meetings stretching from January to May 2003 and later formulated a Sectional Constitution, subsidiary to that of the main Club. The WGS. has also affiliated to the Geologists' Association.

Growth has been steady and currently stands at around 60 'members'. The autumn and winter lecture meetings are followed by spring and summer field excursions; the latter are sometimes far ranging, including Cornwall, Brittany and the Rhineland, but most are fairly local, although there is a policy of shared excursions with neighbouring clubs and societies that take in the surrounding counties. The closest working alliance is with the Herefordshire. & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, to which many WGS members also belong. A small group of W.G.S. members are shortly expected to be engaged in the compilation of a county guide: '*The Geology of Herefordshire*', to be edited by Prof. Mike Rosenbaum and Dr. Paul Oliver. In 2007 the WGS participated in various local projects commemorating the Geological Society of London's bicentenary. The Shropshire Geological Society's Ludlow Symposium was supported; a jointly organised (WGS./EHT) 'Rock and Fossil Roadshow' was held in Leominster; and an elaborately staged Victorian Re-enactment produced in the north of the county.

The WFNC's Geology Section stand at the GA's 2009 'Festival of Geology'.

Likewise the 150th Anniversary celebrations in London of the Geologists' Association (GA) had four of our members in attendance. In 2009 the WGS again had a stand at the GA's 'Festival of Geology'.

EGM and AGM - Summary Reports

One of the best attended of AGMs in recent years was again held during the Geologists' Association's (to whom thanks are expressed for making the venue available) Festival of Geology held at University College, London. Some twenty or so members packed into the EGM and AGM meetings. During the AGM, verbal reports were presented by the Chair, Treasurer and by John Reynolds on the Association's educational projects. Mike Browne's report as Chair included the welcome news that in 2009 the Association gained two new member groups (South West Wales RIGS and Argyll and the Islands RIGS Group), giving a record 51 groups (37 England, 5 Wales, 9 Scotland) and two associates improving upon the previous year's achievement.

Another noteworthy achievement that Mike drew attention to included completing a contract from Natural England worth over £25,000 to contribute towards the **National RIGS Data Collation project**; the project was in two parts requiring (a) the gathering of 650 site boundary and attributes information and (b) the monitoring of a total of 100 site in England. *Most of the income from this project was distributed to the 16 member groups who supported the work*. Sadly he noted that the ALSF funded/Natural England administered, Education Project, (UKRIGS with ESTA, ESEU, and National Stone Centre) continuation bid was surprisingly rejected; however, as Mike said, it is worth checking out the web site for **Earth Science On-Site (ESOS)** - esos.ukrigs.org.uk; this is also a separate site allowing UKRIGS to monitor the demand for the products and hopefully help justify further successful funding.

Alan Cutler (the Association's Treasurer) delivers his analysis of the accounts, whilst Mike Browne attends to the considerable paperwork of an AGM!

AWRG had also received funding for education from the Welsh Assembly and this was distributed to their RIGS groups. Alan Cutler ably presented the Association's financial situation, which is still quite strong despite a difficult year for obtaining external funding. There was considerable and invited discussion on various matters from all in attendance. An increase in the subscription rate to £10 was accepted by the AGM. During the AGM the following members of the Executive Committee of the newly launched GeoConservationUK were elected unopposed; each to serve for two years:

Chairman: Mike Browne [Lothian and Borders RIGS Group]
Treasurer: Alan Cutler [Black Country Geological Society]
Members: Ken Addison [Gwynedd & Mon RIGS Group]
Cynthia Burek [NE Wales RIGS Group]
Kevin Crawford [Cheshire RIGS Group]
Tom Hose [Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group]
Rick Ramsdale [Sheffield Area Geology Trust]

The following existing members of the old UKRIGS Executive Committee have a further year to serve on the newly launched GeoConservationUK Executive Committee:

Secretary: Cheryl Jones [Staffordshire RIGS Group]
Members: Keith Ambrose [Leicestershire & Rutland RIGS Group]
John Reynolds [Staffordshire RIGS Group]

During the EGM immediately preceding the AGM various constitutional changes were approved as follows:

1. In Rule 1 to change of name of the Association to GeoConservationUK
2. In Rule 7b to increase the number of members of the Executive Committee from 10 to 13, by increasing in 7b(ii) the number of members from 7 to 10. [This is in addition to the three Officers of 7b(i) and 6].
3. To introduce in Rule 3 (with necessary correction to the title given to sites in Wales) and at appropriate places the terms Local Site, Local Geological Site [England], Local Geodiversity Site [Scotland] and Regionally Important Geodiversity Site [Wales], as used by government departments, to sit alongside the term RIGS.

Charles Copp (1949-2009) - an Obituary

Some 300 people were packed into Clevedon's Curzon Community Centre on 8th October 2009 for the memorial celebration of the life of Charlie James Thomas Copp. Charles died peacefully on 23rd September surrounded by his family, having suffered from heart problems for some years; he had also been diagnosed with a brain tumour two years ago. Representing UKRIGS at the memorial celebration was Craig Slawson.

Without Charles's contributions to the development of biological and geological recording over the last thrity years, it is doubtful that many of the concepts, practices and methodologies now accepted as norms would be in place. There can be few people working in biological and geological recording and associated data management in the UK who have not come across his ideas and work or have unknowingly hugely benefited from his lifelong commitment to computerised recording. Underlying everything that Charles did was an abiding interest in and an in-depth knowledge of natural history. He clearly recognised the opportunities that biological and geological recording offered to nature conservation, planning and research. Charles was initially based from 1978 at Bristol Museum, as Assistant Curator of Natural History; there he turned the putative local records centre, mainly using Manpower Services recruits, into a reality. In this work he developed an interest and expertise in the use of computers in documentation, applying it to biological recording.

His interest in computers had begun years earlier whilst undertaking a geology degree in Staffordshire, and in subsequent geological research. In 1985 Charles helped form a and chaired, a small group of biological recording activists, a Steering Group that led a year later to the National Federation for Biological Recording. He was a life-long member of NFBR, with extensive periods on its Committee and as an office holder, including Chair from 2004 to 2008. The 2nd NFBR Conference, held in 1987, was hosted by Charles and his BRERC team; discussions at that conference were the catalyst for the development by Stuart Ball of a prototype of 'Recorder'.

In February 1989, he left Bristol Museum to become a self-employed information technology consultant. However, his partnership in a short-lived company, 'Antec', ended in a financial and administrative muddle and he then went truly self-employed, working from home. He then successfully employed his considerable abilities on information-related contracts, together with writing and lecturing. He secured the contract to work with Paul Harding (overseen by Sir John Burnett) to plan, research and prepare the report of the Co-ordinating Commission for Biological Recording. This contract was pivotal both for biological recording in general and for Charles's career development. It was a considerable achievement for him to get the contract as a one-man-band against the strong competition of half-a-dozen prestigious consultancies. Setting aside the eventual consequence of the CCBR study, the development of the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), Charles strengthened the contacts with agencies and local records centres in his new role of Environmental Information Management. It is almost impossible to highlights individual aspects of Charles's career once the NBN process was initiated because he was involved in just about every stage relating to information technology. 'Recorder', in its various manifestations, became an increasingly important part in his work; he was always developing new aspects, data models and add-ons.

Expansion into the management of geological recording and collections data and into its development for use overseas saw him promoting ideas and methods that were often far ahead of others' thinking. He latterly became increasingly involved with international projects, particularly the Natural History Museum's Thesaurus for BioCase. His detailed thinking on the accreditation of local records centres, an eminently practicable piece of work a decade ago, was prepared as a report and presented to several seminars, but it failed to get its truly deserved recognition; unsurprisingly, it is seemingly being revisited by ALERC with Natural England's backing.

Charle's contribution to UK biological and geological recording was undoubtedly unique. Indeed, nobody else contributed so much over so many years. This was recognised by the NBN Trust which in 2006 awarded him Honorary Membership. Charles will be much missed by those who were fortunate enough to know him personally and his absence undoubtedly will be noticed by those missing his wise counsel and expertise in biological and geological recording matters.

PAST CONFERENCE

LOESSFEST'09 (30th August – 3rd September 2009) in Novi Sad, Serbia

A Report by Tom Hose

Lossfest'09 was conceived and planned as a conference to consider and promote several traditional and emerging aspects of loess science. The conference's concept was similar to the previous Loessfest held in Bonn and Heidelberg in 1999. It was intended to, and indeed succeeded in, bringing together the most relevant world wide loess researchers, but also opening up loess investigations to a wider scientific and conservation community. Around sixty individuals from across Europe and wider afield assembled in the Geography Department of Novi Sad for four days of themed presentations, posters and field trips. The major conference topic was understanding climatic and environmental changes recorded in widespread loess - paleosol sequences giving the opportunity for spatial and temporal reconstructions of climatic and environmental changes on local, regional, and continental scale; special attention was paid to loess and dust deposition models, loess typology, mapping loess distribution, and loess landscape evolution and dynamics. However, besides these traditional loess themes there was also a focus on links between past and present dust dynamics and human society in the context of geological, archaeological and historical timescale. One of the innovative topics was related to the identification, conservation and promotion of the loess geo-heritage; which is why I was so pleased to be there, representing Bucks New University and in a way also UKRIGS, as an invited keynote speaker. The morning session, on loess geoconservation and geotourism, I co-chaired with the conference president examined the necessary links between the two - details of that session can be downloaded from: http://www.inqua-loess.org/loessfest09/geoconservation.php.

An exciting geotourism and geoconservation development was announced at that session when plans were unveiled to create the 'Loessland' visitor centre and research complex at the spectacular 40 metre high Stari Slankamen loess-palaeosol section on the Danube, opposite the Tisa confluence, in the Vojvodina region, of North Serbia. At this very attractive riverside locality a modern thematic visitor centre, faced in sheer glass, is to built in several levels leaning on the loess profiles, if the funds can be raised. As well as allowing access to the entire loess sequence, visitors will be able to see interesting exhibitions within various thematic parts, which are going to present many scientific facts connected to Ice Age geology, geography and ecology. The will also be a special emphasis on applying modern audio-visual techniques to make the presentation as attractive and interesting as possible to general audiences. The centre will also contain the usual souvenir shop and a theme café/ restaurant.

Artist's impressions of how the "Loessland" visitor centre will look, from the Danube riverside, on completion; note that its visitors will be able to look directly at the various conserved and protected loess and palaeosol deposits from within the shelter and comfort of the building; they will also be able to witness researchers at work in the various laboratories.

A major feature of the conference was the two days of field trips to visit the best loess gesosites in Europe; these included locations along the River Danube - including the "Loessland" site - the Ruma brickyard, and the Titel loess plateau. Overall, my impressions were that loess research in Europe is in some very capable hands with researchers and conservationists open to new ideas.

A consequence of the success of the geotourism session is the decision by some of the conference organisers to develop a geotourism conference for 2010; the significance of the UK's contribution to geoconservation over many years has not gone unnoticed in Europe. Meanwhile, I must thank the organisers for an excellent programme of themed sessions and socials, along with the opportunity to visit some splendid geosites in the company of experts more than willing to enthusiastically share their knowledge and indulge in lively debate.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

2nd Global Geotourism Conference

This will be held in Mulu, Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia from 17th - 20th April 2010. It will follow on from, and be closely connected with, the ***4th International UNESCO Conference on Geoparks*** *'Geoheritage Education for Sustainability'* being held in Langkawi from 10th -15th April 2010.

Details of the geotourism conference can be downloaded from:
http://www.globalgeotourism.com/

Abstracts of papers must be submitted by 31st December 2009 and, if accepted, will be included in the initial conference bound publication.

GEOTRENDS 2010
Novi Sad, Serbia - 24th-26th June 2010

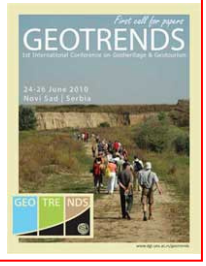
Aims

- Bring together geoscientists, tourism practitioners, academics and protected area managers with a view to strengthening and promoting the discipline of geotourism.
- Promote wider community awareness and protection of natural heritage and its implementation..
- Discuss the role of geotourism as an academic discipline providing the framework and training for the practical application of geotourism.
- Discuss the core content of geotourism namely: geosite attractions and development, the geopark concept, visitor management and geosite/ landscape interpretation and management.
- To set the scene for the integration of geological attractions as an essential component of nature-based tourism and ecotourism.

Themes

1. Resources and Potential Geotourism Destinations
2. Planning and Development Strategies of Geotourism Destinations
3. Sustainability and Destination Management
4. Case studies of good/bad practices in geotourism
5. Geotourism and Geoheritage of Serbia
6. Widening the Scope of Geotourism – Complementary Attractions
7. Education and Interpretation
8. Geoparks
9. Geoconservation

Conference brochure downloadable from:
http://www.dgt.uns.ac.rs/geotrends/files/firstcall.pdf



If you would like to have a mention of, a report about, or to promote a, geoconservation related conference please send the Editor details by the submission deadline (see bottom right) of the appropriate Newsletter issue.

'CREDITS'

Address for Newsletter correspondence:
Dr. Thomas A. Hose,
Buckinghamshire New University,
Queen Alexandra Road, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire, HP11 2JZ

NATURAL ENGLAND

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It is always interesting and enjoyable to read about Groups' activities and their work, together with other geoconservation meetings and events. To share your news and views, please contact:
Dr Thomas A. Hose,
GeoConservationUK Newsletter *Editor,*
tom.hose@bucks.ac.uk

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Please get your items in earlier if at all possible!